

# News Release

Region 2 – New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

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## **EPA to Discuss Plans for Addressing Contaminated Passaic River Sediment**

*Public Meetings Scheduled for May 9 in Lyndhurst, New Jersey*

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(New York, N.Y. – May 8, 2012) – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will discuss plans to address high levels of contaminants, including PCBs, mercury and dioxin, which are present in Passaic River mud adjacent to Riverside Park in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. Dioxin causes serious health effects, including cancer. PCBs are suspected carcinogens and mercury can cause serious damage to the nervous system. Steps are being taken under the Superfund program by the EPA to isolate and prevent movement of the contaminants from this area to other parts of the river. EPA is overseeing technical planning that has been initiated by the parties potentially responsible for the contamination. Superfund is the federal cleanup program established in 1980 to investigate and clean up the country's most hazardous waste sites. The Superfund program operates on the principle that polluters should pay for the cleanups, rather than passing the costs to taxpayers. When sites are placed on the Superfund list, the EPA looks for parties responsible for the pollution and requires them to pay for the cleanups. Cleanups are only funded by taxpayer dollars when the responsible parties cannot be found or are not financially viable.

In the long term, risks to people wading in contaminated mud in the Passaic River alongside Riverside Park are slightly above EPA levels of concern. The EPA recommends that the public avoid wading in the mud flats in Lyndhurst.

The EPA will hold two public meetings on May 9 to discuss the planned cleanup actions and the results of recent sampling efforts in Riverside Park and the adjacent mud flats. The public meetings will be held from 3 PM to 5 PM and again from 7 PM to 9 PM in the court room of Lyndhurst Town Hall located at 367 Valleybrook Avenue.

The EPA estimates that cleanup work in the contaminated mud flats adjacent to Riverside County Park in Lyndhurst could begin in spring 2013 and extend for a period of time into summer 2013. The EPA will work closely with local officials, river and park users, the Passaic River Community Advisory Group, stakeholder organizations and the Lyndhurst community to provide information on these plans, coordinate the cleanup, and minimize possible disruptions to river and park use to the extent possible.

The EPA is overseeing a comprehensive investigation of contamination in the Passaic River that is being carried out by a group of parties potentially responsible for the contamination. Preliminary findings suggest that there could be six to eight additional mud flats in the Newark Bay to Garfield stretch of the river where elevated levels of contamination could warrant a closer look and possible action. While the EPA does not anticipate that the other mud flats present an immediate threat to recreational users of the park or river, it is working with the potentially responsible parties to plan additional sampling out of an abundance of caution. Those detailed sampling plans are being developed now to examine the mud flat areas.

Results from the latest round of mud flat sampling from this past winter are currently undergoing final review by the EPA. Any follow-up sampling deemed necessary by the EPA will likely take place under EPA oversight later this summer or fall, with results expected back in late 2012. EPA will provide the public with the sampling results as the information becomes available and will ensure that all communities are effectively engaged and informed.

Very low levels of PCBs, mercury and dioxin were found earlier this year in soil in the Lyndhurst and North Arlington sections of Riverside Park that likely were carried there by flooding. The concentrations of contaminants detected are well below established levels of concern for children and adolescents playing in the park and for workers maintaining the park. The EPA does not plan on additional sampling of the parks' recreational areas and cleanup in the park is not necessary. The public can continue to enjoy using Riverside County Park in Lyndhurst but should practice proper hygiene that would normally be followed at any urban park that is prone to flooding.

Information on the investigation and cleanup activities in the lower Passaic River is available on the project Web sites at <http://www.ourpassaic.org> or <http://www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/diamondalkali/>

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